



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

“To Protect and Serve”

Office of the Commissioner

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Child Passenger Safety Takes Center Stage in September

U.S. Virgin Islands - The VI Office of Highway Safety (VIOHS) and the VI Police Department (VIPD) joined the country in September to increase child passenger safety awareness for motorists who transport young children. Activities leading up to, during and following Child Passenger Safety Week – September 17-23, 2023 – aimed to educate, engage, and encourage caregivers to make safe choices when transporting children in their care.

The VIOHS Occupant Protection Program engaged public elementary schools – epicenters for caregivers of young children in the territory – and erected banners on each campus explaining USVI child passenger safety laws. VIPD Traffic Officers also visited schools during the dismissal hour to educate caregivers observed transporting child passengers unsafely and provided flyers inviting caregivers to apply for no- to low-cost booster seats through VIOHS. “Education and resources are critical components in helping caregivers choose safety for child passengers,” offered VIPD Commissioner Ray A. Martinez. “VIPD is committed to supporting efforts that reduce unnecessary injuries and fatalities for child crash victims.” Following the provision of education and resources, high visibility enforcement is planned. “Enforcement is that final, but necessary push to convince caregivers to make safe choices to protect those in their care,” stated Commissioner Martinez.

During September, the agency also hosted car seat distribution events and car seat safety checks in each district. Through the initiatives, 115 car seats and over 340 booster seats were distributed to caregivers in need. “The Virgin Islands Office of Highway Safety sincerely thanks community partners who stepped up for our children by donating over 90% of the booster seats provided to the community,” expressed VIOHS Director Daphne O’Neal. “We also thank caregivers who benefitted from distribution efforts, making a conscious choice to secure their precious cargo. We have a long way to go in our journey to reduce crash risks for vehicle occupants. However, this is a great start.” Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians were on hand to assist caregivers with the safe use and installation of the safety seats.

Buckle up, VI! Every trip. Everyone. Every time. For more information on child passenger safety or the VIOHS Car Seat Loaner Program, contact the Virgin Islands Office of Highway Safety through Director O’Neal at daphne.oneal@vipd.vi.gov or Occupant Protection Planner/Coordinator Denise Gomes at denise.gomes@vipd.vi.gov or via telephone at (340) 473-7383.

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